

# Book Tells Truth "Stranger than Fiction"

In 1841, a free African American from New York who was visiting Washington, D.C., was kidnapped and sold into slavery in the South. He lived as a slave for 12 years before regaining his freedom in 1853. Solomon Northup told of his harrowing experiences in a full-length book. At the time of its publication before the Civil War, Frederick Douglass called Northup's story truth that is "stranger than fiction."

Now Many Cultures Publishing has released "Twelve Years a Slave," excerpts from the real life story of Solomon Northup. The story has been produced in book form and on audiocassette. Actor, playwright and director Ossie Davis calls it: "a powerful work. I recommend it without reservation."

Northup's story is retold in a dramatic reading by African-American actor, singer and high school teacher Wendell Brooks, who lives

in Oakland Calif. The resulting three 30-minute audiocassettes feature Brooks singing work songs and spirituals from the period and playing the violin, the musical instrument that Northup played with virtuosity.

Brooks chose work songs and spirituals appropriate to the narrative, always using actual text from the period. In the tradition of the music, he sometimes improvised the accompanying melodies.

"This music empowered slaves to gain some control over their lives," Brooks said. "It is important for today's African-American youth to understand the dynamics of slavery. How African Americans as a people developed over more than two centuries of slavery, and how their identity was molded by it. Twelve years a slave is an important tool for teachers in furthering this understanding by showing how African Americans were able to



Wendell Brooks

maintain their dignity in spite of slavery."

Northup was extraordinary, not only because he was so talented, he was perceptive. Despite being brutalized, he understood slavery left its cruel mark even on the slave holder. In recounting the recapture of a runaway, Northup observes:

"The effect of these exhibitions of brutality on the household of the slave holder that he is cruel, so much as it is the fault of the system under which he lives."

"This book presents a unique view of slavery from the inside by a literate free African American," says editor Alice Lucas, former San Francisco middle school teacher. "Northup possessed a compassionate understanding of the people who helped him as a slave."

He had the insight to recognize how terribly crippling the slave system was to the white people who participated in it. Classroom teachers tell me what a great need this work fills. It performs a valuable service to our students."

"Twelve Years a Slave" can be ordered from Many Cultures Publishing, P.O. Box 425646, San Francisco, Calif. 94142-5646.

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# Shaw Elected To Bank Board

Talbert O. Shaw, president of Shaw University in Raleigh, has been elected to the board of directors of First Citizens BancShares Inc., parent company of First Citizens Bank, according to Lewis R. Holding, chairman of the board. He will also serve on the board directors of First Citizens Bank.

A native North Carolinian, Shaw earned master's and doctorate degrees at the University of Chicago

in Illinois, where he was a University Fellow.

He is listed in the Who's Who among Black Educators and is an Academic Associate with the Atlantic Council of the United States. Prior to being named president of Shaw University in 1987, he held senior administrative positions at Morgan State University in Maryland and Howard University in Washington, D. C.



Talbert O. Shaw

# Urban League Gives Awards

Gloria Frazier, director of the Winston-Salem Urban League's "Side By Side Family Development Program," coordinated the African-American Family Conference on Feb. 12-13 at the Holiday Inn-North. The conference featured workshops, an awards ceremony and a luncheon.

Awards recipients were: The Rev. Benjamin P. Daniels, Outstanding African-American Pastor Award; the Vannoy Family, Outstanding African-American Family Award; Kalida Lovell, Outstanding African-American Single Parent Award; Robert Greer, Outstanding African-American Male Award;

Felecia P. McMillian, Outstanding African-American Female Award; Barbara O. Benson, Outstanding African-American Elder Award; Maggie Edwards, Outstanding African-American Economic Development; and William L. Sturdivant and Thomasina L. Lentz, Outstanding African-American Youth Awards. Community resource persons and a several people outside the community presented workshops to uplift the African-American family. Delores J. Smith, president and CEO of the Winston-Salem Urban League, presented "African Americans from a Historical Perspective."



Sonya Jennings



Michael Jennings

# Game to Benefit Jennings Family

In memory of Police Officer Michael R. Jennings, a benefit basketball game between the Winston-Salem Police Department and the Winston-Salem Recreation Department will be held March 28 at 3 p.m. at Hanes Hosiery Recreation

Center. Proceeds will go toward a scholarship fund for Jennings' 1-year-old daughter, Nia.

Jennings was killed on duty in January in an automobile accident. Tickets are available at Winston-Salem recreation centers.

# Omega Psi Phi Hosts Memorial Services

The Omega Psi Phi Fraternity Inc., Psi Phi Chapter, hosted a memorial ceremony on March 10 at the Winston-Salem Urban League to honor the memories of Omega men. This was the first time that the memorial service was opened to the public, and a large audience turned out to share in this occasion.

Wives of deceased brothers were presented long-stemmed red roses.

Edwin L. Patterson, coordinator of the memorial services and a Omega for many years, opened the ceremony with prayer.

Alonzo Stephens said: "We honor these men who created Psi Phi Chapter then and now. They were great men, and we honor them

and their steps in the sand."

Omega Psi Phi has mandated the month of March to hold annual memorial services to honor Omega men who have died. The ceremony is a tradition that was started shortly after the formation of the fraternity.

Omega Basileus Ronald Hughes said: "This is somewhat of a solemn occasion ... however, we all here are friends. These Omega men were very important men not only in the lives of the Psi Phi Chapter, but in the heartbeat and the life-line in Winston-Salem."

We pause to contemplate the good lives they lived ... they lived a spirited and challenging life that is demanded of all Omega men."

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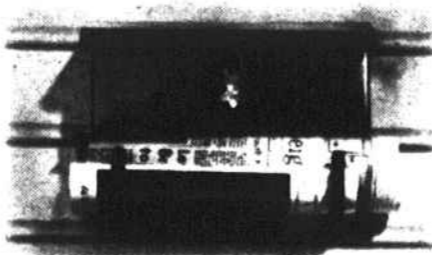


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